

Page Denied

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

Background Statement on Functions of FBIS

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) was established by the Federal Communications Commission in 1941 to monitor German, Italian and Japanese public radio broadcasts. It became part of the CIA when the Agency was organized in 1947. Its role--assigned to CIA by the National Security Council--is to monitor foreign radio, television and press service news and commentary broadcasts to collect information meeting the needs of U. S. Government departments and agencies. Also by NSC direction, FBIS scans and translates information from foreign language publications and documents. The majority of its published products are unclassified and are widely distributed throughout the U. S. Government; much of the product is also made available to the academic community and others in the public sector.

FBIS field stations provide a continuous flow of reporting by wire on current developments abroad. The information is published 5 days a week in the Daily Report, issued in 6 area volumes and an all-area White Book. Three of the area volumes are available for public subscription through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), Department of Commerce, and the White Book is distributed by the Library of Congress. The FBIS Wire Service, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, provides rapid dissemination of current news to Government watch offices.

FBIS also manages the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), which was established to meet intelligence community requirements for translation of unclassified materials from foreign newspapers, periodicals and books. As with the Daily Report, JPRS translations, issued in some 66 serial reports, are made available for public subscription through NTIS.

JPRS has been publicly identified as a component of the Department of Commerce for several years. Some 65,000 JPRS reports have been issued, and they constitute a valuable product for the foreign affairs and academic communities as well as for the intelligence community and the U. S. Government at large. The CIA has decided that this arrangement, though technically legal and highly effective, is no longer appropriate, and intends to acknowledge its sponsorship of JPRS.

The CIA proposes to use the accompanying unclassified statement regarding JPRS in response to questions about JPRS if the statement is agreeable to the Department of Commerce. It will also be used as the basis for briefing appropriate Congressional Committees. When given the go ahead, FBIS will contact NTIS to make the necessary arrangements to complete this action. Such arrangements will include timing, contract employee payroll conversion, and necessary changes in telephone listings, JPRS report covers, and JPRS stationery.

BACKGROUND STATEMENT - JPRS

The end of World War II marked the beginning of an information explosion in open foreign-language sources (newspapers, periodicals, books) of interest to U. S. Government departments and agencies. The launching of Sputnik in 1957 heightened interest in foreign scientific and technological information, an interest shared by the Federal Government, the scientific and academic community, and the public at large. At the same time, foreign publications were multiplying so rapidly that it was beyond the capability of any single Federal agency to translate, with its normal staff, the volume and variety of material involved. Therefore, in 1957 the U. S. Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) was established with a small staff supported by freelance contract translators to meet the ever increasing demand for translating open foreign-language sources.

All JPRS translations came from open-source material. Further, JPRS functioned as a translation service for the entire U. S. Government, accepting translation requests from other Government departments and agencies. It received its funding from the Central Intelligence Agency as a service of common concern to the whole Government. Finally, the Department of Commerce, in keeping with its interest in disseminating scientific and technical data, became the channel for providing public access to the translations produced by JPRS. What started out as informal ties gradually developed to the point where JPRS became publicly identified as a component of the Department of Commerce.

Over the years the JPRS translation program has been broadened to cover a wide spectrum of languages and subject matter. JPRS now publishes some 66 regular reports covering political, economic, scientific and sociological developments around the world and has a worldwide subscribership. In carrying out this translation program, the JPRS serves the

needs of the Intelligence Community. It is therefore an essential mechanism in the national intelligence process and for this reason it must remain directly responsive to the requirements of the Director of Central Intelligence in the discharge of his statutory functions.

A recent review of the status of JPRS as part of a review of all Agency activities has led to a determination that the identification of JPRS as a Department of Commerce component should cease. The Department of Commerce will continue, in the interests of efficiency, to handle public subscriptions for JPRS reports.

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PROPOSED PUBLIC RESPONSE TO POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO
EITHER COMMERCE OR CIA ASKING WHETHER COMMERCE
IS COVERING CIA ACTIVITIES OTHER THAN JPRS.

The Department of Commerce and the Central Intelligence Agency have for many years cooperated with each other regarding the collection and processing of foreign intelligence information in those instances where their respective responsibilities or interests are related. The change in status of the Joint Publications Research Service will not affect other aspects of this continuing inter-agency cooperation.

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Page Denied

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied